

AFTERMATH OF THE WAR

and police officers. On the other hand, a Provisional Congress of Azerbaijan that had been called into being earlier in the fall and that was composed of party supporters, designated a thirty-nine-man commission to organize elections to a provincial National Assembly. These elections were carried out in an atmosphere of terror and intimidation and in their own crude way followed Soviet patterns. The Democratic party was the only one presenting candidates. No organized opposition existed. The nationalist press and even mail from other parts of Iran was barred entry into Azerbaijan or—in some cases—was burned outright by Soviet censors.

On December 12 the provincial National Assembly was formally inaugurated in Tabriz. It was composed of 101 deputies, all Democrats or individuals forced into collaboration under duress. Its first step on its first day was to proclaim the Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and to designate a government under the "premiership" of the veteran Comintern agent Ja'afar Pishevari. The "government" of Azerbaijan announced that the autonomous state would be conducted on "democratic principles" but that it did not desire separation from Iran. It also issued a program that said that private property would be inviolable; that "traitors and reactionaries" would be purged from the gendarmerie; that a "people's army" would be formed from local militia groups; and that Turkish would be the official language of the state. It added that the government would distribute to the peasants government-owned land as well as that of "reactionary landlords who ran away from Azerbaijan."

A few days after the constitution of the revolutionary government

was completed, the Azerbaijan Assembly was disbanded and its functions were transferred to the provisional presidium, whose authority overlapped with that of the cabinet. The new regime quickly proceeded to carry out its plans. It started a land-distribution program. It nationalized all banks in Tabriz holding 3,000,000 tomans or more. It introduced Turkish in the administration and the schools and took steps to establish a university. Several measures were also taken favoring the workers over the industrialists. Furthermore, a commission formed from representatives of the Ministries of Trade, Economics, and Finance was called upon to establish trade connections with foreign governments.